

COMPILATION OF THE LITERARY WORKS OF MY FATHER, ALVARO FIGUEREDO

The circumstances

For many years my mother, Amalia, had been concerned, and quite naturally, about the fate of the literary works of my father. Over many years it had taken me a long time to become precisely aware of what constituted the work, of how to gather it and how to exhibit it to the public for it to be known, enjoyed and studied.

In March 1989, together with my wife Ana-María, we visited my mother at the original home in Pan de Azúcar. During those three weeks of almost summery vacation, I was reviewing, rereading and thinking and eventually organizing the works of my father. Perhaps the surroundings of those three weeks helped me carry out an intensive but also gratifying task. These were three weeks of deep emotions, not only by rediscovering his works but also because of the surroundings: the daily contact with family and friends, the confirmation that many things remained as they were in my childhood. The original home had still its known characteristic rooms: toward the front, the shelves with books that had been glanced upon or read and which my father took from the bookshelves without doubt of where it was, and his citations marked with a pencil at border of the pages; on one side was the dining room, with an ample rectangular table where in days of creative tension one could hear the incessant buzzing of the typewriter; the long narrow hall toward the back of the house, with bedrooms on either side and where you could feel, on walking, the air gliding past your face. And getting out to the backyard, as done so many times before, to inhale and almost smell the fresh air of April; and there they were, the palm tree filled with ripe *butiás*, not now the banana plant but the fig tree with broken branches, and the ground covered with grass and a thick vine whistling on the wind. Beyond the backyard, the neighbouring houses: the façade of the yellow house, the backyard of Don Antonio's house (now without the *sabiá*), the frond of the *ibirapitá* of the schoolyard, and the white tower of the church. And beyond, one could imagine the town, the undulating fields, the creeks bordered with tree thickets, the sea arriving to the beach in Punta Colorada. And the Pan de Azúcar hill: "In the beginning was the mount," he had said when the town was declared a city. I later walked

along the tiled paths, beside the ballast covered streets, I heard the muted sounds of the morning while crossing the plaza with its benches under the *paraíso* trees and palms, or the brilliant sounds of the children in the schoolyard. I recognized the houses with rebuilt facades, and with more difficulty the names of the smiling and almost forgotten faces of the people who salute me in the streets. And later, the long conversations with my mother and my wife, over the daily meals or about the ample table in the dining room now covered with aged papers, carpets and periodicals. And the lively chats with friends and family (do you remember?) who visited our home daily, bringing a plate with *tortas fritas* or with fried fish, or news or just their company.

Overall, during those three weeks, everything was a stimulus to begin the delayed task. And I give thanks from here.

Definition of literary work

To define is to delimit, to establish the measures of a territory. When I asked my mother where she had kept the works, she pointed to the shelves of a French sideboard in the dining room, to another old wardrobe in my old sleeping room and to bookshelves in the front room. Forever she had been gathering my father's written pages as well as periodical clippings of interest, letters, documents, notes and photographs that had been accumulating in note books, magazine envelopes, carpets or bundles with threads of varying colours. When I began to glance over all those routinely saved papers, the question which repeated itself was: Where is the limit of the literary opus of a writer who was also teacher, a professor of literature and philosophy, a journalist and an active citizen? Even if we consider only the writer's opus, should I limit this to the typewritten notes or consider also those draft or handwritten notes in a notebook? And why not consider the abundant newspaper clippings or the marking made on the border of pages as a book was read; or the actual selection of books in the bookshelves? And why not consider as part of the opus also the notes taken verbatim by alumni from his literature classes? And why not the many letters received and the copies of those sent out? And why not the orally recalled poems, or the conversations, or the remembered actions of people who surrounded him?

Given the vague limit of the literary opus – like a beach and its sand dunes, like a changing sea shore- I opted to maintain everything that could be arranged in folders and leave aside the bookshelves and oral anecdotes. Wallek and Warren have affirmed in *Theory of Literature* that, “The natural and sensible beginning of a work of literary study is the interpretation and analysis of the literary work itself. Really, it is only the work which justifies our interest in the life of the author, in his social environment, in the total process of the literature.... One of the first tasks of investigation is the gathering of materials, the care to undo the effects of time, the examination of authorship, authenticity and date.” I can say that my task is very a preliminary step, to just organize the materials, to begin to undo the effects of the time.

Methodology

Confronted with the chaos of the varied material –the clean and the dusty carpets, the pages typewritten or printed, the notebooks with manuscript notes or with adhered clippings, the letters in yellowing envelopes –the first task is to order, to classify. The goal of ordering is to make the whole comprehensible, to encompass in one view the totality of a panorama and say: I know where I am; these are the cardinal points. The most just order for human beings and their production is history. Our development occurs in the unidirectionality of time. The organization of the opus must be, therefore, chronologic: yesterday giving way to today and tomorrow. However, the main impediment is that many documents are not dated and, whereas it might be possible to date them, the task will be major and impossible to realize in a short time.

Given the chronological difficulty, and after long conversations with my mother and wife, I opted for a classification that can be both simple and independent of the documentation value. Thus, future investigations could easily find the document for dating, authenticating, and analyzing it in its literary value. Basically the documentation is divided into three parts: prose works, poetic works, and peripheral documents. The work in prose is itself separated according to literary genres such as short stories, plays, essays on literary, historical or pedagogical subjects, *estampas* for school children, discourses and periodical articles. The work in poetry is divided into two categories: poetry in general and poetry in specific forms such as romances,

cantos, hymns and children poetry. Within each of these categories the poems are in alphabetical order by title or the first line of untitled poem. In poems titled beginning with an article (*el, la, los, las, mi, mis*) the second word is considered. The rest of the opus consists of peripheral documents and is simply ordered in general categories of easy comprehension: notebooks with classroom notes and those with newspaper clippings, work in print, biographical data, periodicals and mailings to Álvaro.

Listing of the opus

Below is a summary listing of the numbered folders as well its titles and content. When the titles are original they are in quotation marks; the others are simply described by the subject matter. A more detailed listing is shown in the Appendix. This was performed by my daughter, Dr. María del Luján Figueredo, Professor of Spanish Language and Literature at York University, Toronto, Canada. It is based on data of my original compilation.

Work in prose: Folders #1 to #14

#1 – Short story: Six

#2 – Theatre: Two

#3 – Essay: One: “Vida y obra de Cervantes”

#4 – Essay: One: “El mundo humano y plástico de Persiles y Segismunda”

#5 - Essay: One: “Cómo aman los poetas”

#6 – Essay: One: “Visión de Martí”

#7 – Essays: Three: about novel by Francisco Espínola

#8 - Essays: Eleven: about “Artigas y el gaucho”, Bmé. Hidalgo, pensamiento arielista de Rodó, about Tabaré de J. Zorrilla de San Martín, Parra del Riego, Roberto and Sara de Ibáñez, María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira, Esther de Cáceres, J.J. Morosoli, and drafts about books of Juan Cunha and Luis A. Caputti

#9 – Essays: Two about la novela *María* by Jorge Isaacs, and three about author's poetry

#10 – Essays: Three about children poetry

#11 – Essay: “El contralor del trabajo escolar” (print)

#12 – *Estampas*: “El libro de Goyito” (print)

#13 – Public Speeches: Eleven

#14 – Periodical articles: Six in *Marcha*, eight in *Diario Punta del Este*

Works in poetry Folders #15 to #31

#15 to #26 - Two hundred and forty-five poems listed in alphabetical order in Folders A to Z

#27 – Romances: Fifteen

#28 – Cantos: Four

#29 – Cantos: Three

#30 – Miscellanea: Seven poems and five hymns

#31 – Children poetry: *ABC del Gallito verde* (fifty poems)

Peripheral Documents: Folders #32 to #50

#32 – Periodical *Mástil* (16 issues)

#33 – Printed books: Three

#34 – Biographical notes, including two interviews

#35 – Important notebooks #1 to #6 with handwritten notes

#36 – Other note books with hand written notes by Alvaro or Amalia

#37 – Notebooks with handwritten notes by alumni taken verbatim during literature classes

#38 and #39 – Originals and notes about the publication of *Mundo a la vez*

#40 – Notes related to the mailing of the opus to the Ministry of Culture (1967)
and about his nomination to the Academia de Letras (1965)

#41 to #44 – Personal notes including letter and other documents

#45 to #48 – Saved periodical pages

#49 and #50 – Letters to Álvaro

The future of the opus

The purpose of compiling and ordering the opus of my father was to transfer it to a public institution for its custody as well as its accessibility for study. The decision about its repository has been long and difficult and it has its own history. In 1967, at the instigation of Esther de Cáceres, my mother collected and selected most of the literary work which was then sent to the Ministry of Culture for its eventual publication. Incredibly, all that selection was lost, it disappeared in some anonym desk, perhaps ending up in some bureaucratic wastebasket. My father would have flashed his irritation and then would have smiled because that fact confirmed his doubt about city-ways of unnamed responsibility and his confidence in the mutual comprehension of the individual personhood of towns and rural areas. One such group of friends and admirers of his literary work has been working since 1970 on expanding the knowledge and the publication of his work. Under their aegis, and with the help of my mother, books have published such as *Poesía* (1975), *ABC del Gallito Verde* (1977) and *Vida y obra de Cervantes* (1986), and also promoted in periodicals. This same group has created a wide array of cultural activity in the region and in October 1988 it hosted the 2nd Congress of Writers from the country outside Montevideo. This group has also created “Casa de Cultura de Pan de Azúcar,” that has a house-museum and is now our repository of the work of my father. The tasks of this group have been hard and will be more difficult in the future, they know it and I have confidence in them.

The revision and ordering of this opus has given me the sense of fragility not only physical state of the papers turning into dust and the written letters fading but also about its possible interpretation both of the literary work as well as of the “peripheral documentation.” In long conversations with this group of friends we have planned some initial steps to facilitate access by

copying all documents for the purposes of study. And it would be helpful to have a registration of those asking for access with an indication of research purpose and to know how many people are interested in it.

I mentioned in Methodology that human being and opus exist in time. The recent opportunity to see the entire opus all at once gave me a perspective I did not have before when I read and thought about separate examples. When seeing the whole we witness the development in time, both the changing and the persistent thoughts and images. The writing changes over 40 years. The 20 year-old youngster writes anxiously one poem a day and the flashing images not always interlace. Lets see this fragment of “El circo” of 1927:

El payaso, sudando albayalde y carbón,
Dice una barbaridad,
Grita, salta, patalea
Y se estira como una chimenea
Con el bigote de humo de su jovialidad,
(La garlopa fugaz de su ironía,
Saca de nuestros labios, virutas de alegría).

As the writer matures in poems, essays, romances y cantos, even Gallito Verde, his targets are more limited and the aim more certain. Let's read this fragment of “Oda a la Paz después de la Victoria” (1944):

Quiero cantar la Paz, pero llorando
Sus vestiduras negras y su fría
Corola de laurel desconsolado.
La cantaré no más allá del aire
Ni más allá de su sustancia humana,
Que un cementerio de ángeles me mira

Y un ancho mar de muertos me pregunta

cómo es la Paz después de la Victoria.

Finally, in the poems surrounding his book *Mundo a la vez* his writing is firm, accurate, all meant with no dressing, the structure of the form stemming from the imagery and thought. Let's see "Extasis y pecado" (1963):

Es David

(No soy yo)

El rey despójase

De orgullo y vestiduras. Danza el salmo.

La ofendida Michāl tras la mirilla.

Jerusalén amándolo.

Es David.

Sus rodillas estatuyen

La ceremonia, el delirante rango.

Si no fuera David, ¿quién lo sería?

(Acaso yo) 1930.

Un bandoneón reptando hacia la esquina

Del Puerto. El bar sacrílego

¡Qué tango!

But throughout those 40 years there is a persistence of direction, character, worries and thoughts slowly formed: freedom, death, sin, true man. During these years he converses with many writers and artists but some more than others: Spengler, Unamuno, Rousseau, Goethe, Antonio Machado, the writer of the Bible, Walt Whitman, Cervantes, Artigas, Cesar Vallejo, Martí, James Joyce, Picasso, Parra del Riego, Francisco Espínola, Faulkner, and again Spengler and its "Decline of the West." How many roads to investigate, not

only in the evolution of the writing and ideas but in the success of an individual poem, essay or discourse.

The opus, like a beach, is left now exposed to the sea and the steps of the visiting people. And the beach, although changing, will continue being a beach in spite of the proud sea and the footprints of the visitors. The opus is now there so that its art can be enjoyed as a well-known beach would be.